

MISSION FIELD.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN.

Continued.

THE BUDDHISTS OF TO-DAY

are far beneath the Shintoists in point of intellectual ability. It is essentially a happy-go-lucky secular religion, attractive ceremonial, with fat well fed priests and nothing in it to make a powerful appeal to the conscience. Even in temple grounds hang huge votive lanterns bearing the name of some famous dancing or singing girl—a mere bid for popularity. Fencing-bouts, broad farces, and wrestling matches are given within the precincts of the temples and by authority of the priests. The worshipper approaches the porch strikes one of the great bells or gongs that hang in front of the high altar and throws his contributions into the iron clasped cof-fer at one side. The offerings are often, indeed as a rule, of the smallest value; one-half of a cent is above the average donation, and yet at a recent festival of one of the most famous shrines in Tokio the total contributions amounted to more than \$13,000. Altogether nearly a million people are supposed to have found their way thither. It is an easy way to get to Nirvana of Nirvana means heaven.

Christianity has to deal in Japan with three native religions,—Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism,—two of which are rapidly dying out. A few years ago the government formally severed all official connection between Shintoism and the state. Annual appropriations are still made for the preservation of the most famous Shinto shrines, as they contain the tombs of many of the former rulers of the land. But the state is without a religion, and it remains to be seen whether Protestantism or Roman Catholicism is to carry the day. One way or the other the government is sure to take.

LOOSE MORALS OF THE NOBILITY.

The great laxity of the marriage laws is another obstacle in the path of Christian propagandism. To this day the mikado has twelve "wives" besides the legitimate empress, and the heir apparent, little Prince Haru ("Spring") is the son of one of these concubines. This is, perhaps the strongest evidence of the semi-civilization to be found in Japan. The children of concubines are legitimate and it very often happens that the mistress of the household urges her husband to take one or more "assistant wives." But the position of wives in Japan is a puzzling subject, and one which cannot be intelligibly explained with in the limits of a letter. For while concubinage is still customary, a movement in the opposite direction is very pronounced. The girls normal schools, and other high educational establishment in Japan are admirably conducted and ladies now begin to go into society in the company of their husbands, an unheard of proceeding ten years ago. New marriage laws have been drafted and are to be put in force

Some time next year, and the better educated classes especially those who come in frequent contact with foreigners, are outspoken against concubinage. There is nothing in any of the religions of Japan to discountenance this custom. The only hope is in Christianity. These things will soon be over and gone, and then Japan will have removed a dark blot from her escutcheon. But the reform must commence where the evil is most deeply rooted—with the nobility, who loose morals are even now a standing reproach to the nation.

THE OUTLOOK.

The hundred of thousands of dollars spent upon the Christianization of Japan have not been misspent. It is a wonderful, lovable people, with a marvelous sense of beauty, deeply imbued with romance, quick to respond to any change in the mood, polite and deferential and gazing still at the wonders of the world beyond their borders with admiring awe and the longing to imitate and adopt all that has contributed to the greatness of the occident.

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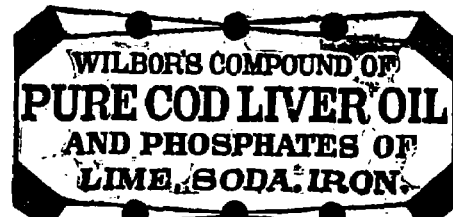
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